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OO RUEHCHI RUEHCN RUEHDT RUEHHM
DE RUEHHI #1044/01 2560851
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
O 120851Z SEP 08
FM AMEMBASSY HANOI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8436
INFO RUEHHM/AMCONSUL HO CHI MINH IMMEDIATE 5100
RUEHXS/ASEAN COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 HANOI 001044

SENSITIVE
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SUBJECT: (U) Deputy Secretary Negroponte's September 11, 2008
conversation with Vietnam Vice Minister of Public Security Nguyen
Van Huong

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INTERNET POSTING.

1. (U) September 11, 2008; 14:00; Hanoi, Vietnam.

2. (U) Participants:

U.S.
The Deputy Secretary
Ambassador Michael Michalak
Deputy Assistant Secretary Scot Marciel
PolCouns Brian Aggeler
D Special Asst. Kaye Lee
D Special Asst. Ted Wittenstein
Jane Bocklage (Embassy Notetaker)

Vietnam
Vice Minister of Public Security Nguyen Van Huong
MPS Senior Colonel Dao Tam Chau
MPS General Security Deputy Director General To Lam
MFA Director General Nguyen Ba Hung
MFA Assistant Director Americas Department Le Chi Dung

3. (SBU) SUMMARY. Meeting September 11, the Deputy Secretary and
Vietnam's Vice Minister for Public Security (MPS) Nguyen Van Huong
expressed pleasure at the continued development of a strong
bilateral relationship. VM Huong offered contradictory views on the
expansion of the Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC) consular district denying
that the Government of Vietnam places restrictions on diplomats'
movements, but complaining about meetings with dissidents. He
requested that U.S. diplomats "notify" the MPS and local officials
in advance of "sensitive" meetings. VM Huong expressed his views on
China's territorial claim in the South China Sea and lamented the
lack of U.S. support for Vietnam's position. Huong said the
Minister of Public Security Le Hong Anh planned to visit the U.S. in
the near future. END SUMMARY.

HO CHI MINH CITY CONSULAR DISTRICT

4. (SBU) The Deputy Secretary urged Vietnam to recognize ConGen Ho
Chi Minh City's (HCMC) full consular district, assuring VM Huong
that consulate officers have no hidden agenda when they travel
outside of Ho Chi Minh City. VM Huong acknowledged that the work of
U.S. diplomats was not a threat, but noted that southern Vietnam has
regions with "special characteristics," including areas with a high
concentration of ethnic minorities, particularly Khmers. The
consular district expansion must take into consideration these
special characteristics. When pressed, Huong denied that Vietnam
restricts the work of diplomats and insisted that U.S. diplomats
from Hanoi and HCMC can go where they want to go. He said this was
the first he had heard of the problem.

15. (SBU) At the same time, Huong asserted that the MPS often hears complaints from local officials regarding U.S. diplomats' meetings with local people. Highlighting recent meetings by officers in HCMC with political dissidents, Huong explained that local authorities believe such meetings are counterproductive, encourage unlawful activities, and demonstrate U.S. support for activities against the government. Huong said that national level MPS officials understand the U.S. desire to meet with such people, but noted the need to respect local authorities. Huong requested that the U.S. inform local authorities in advance of all such meetings and suggested that there be a direct and official line of communication to inform MPS of U.S. meetings with "sensitive individuals." The Deputy Secretary explained U.S. diplomats around the world meet with all different types of people in the societies where they are posted. Huong noted that while trust is growing between the U.S., the U.S. must understand that there are still Vietnamese who are sensitive about the role of the U.S. He committed to engage with the Ambassador on this issue.

REGIONAL SECURITY AND THE SOUTH CHINA SEA

16. (SBU) Huong expressed the view that regional security, peace and prosperity cannot be accomplished without the presence of the U.S., adding that the U.S. presence can help regulate relationships in the region. He emphasized that Vietnam seeks good relations with all countries, particularly its neighbors; however, Vietnam cannot accept China's territorial claims in the South China Sea. Offering strong MPS support for the upcoming dialogue on defense issues in October with Assistant Secretary Kimmitt, Huong hoped the dialogue would include an in-depth discussion of this issue. In response to Huong's lament that the U.S. does not take a position on the South China Sea, the Deputy Secretary underscored that the USG does

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support the right of U.S. businesses to carry out legitimate business with Vietnam.

MICHALAK